

Delivering 5 pledges

The very clear pledge to stop the small boats should unite the nation. Some of the methods to stop them can also do so. Disagreement comes between those who want to stop the illegals from gaining entry in due course, and those who think many of them are asylum seekers who should be flagged through and treated well. This too is more a disagreement about who the illegal travellers are than about what should happen to them. Most agree if someone is fleeing violence they deserve to find a safe haven. Most agree if a rich young economic migrant buys a place on a boat with a view to getting rights to live and work in the UK when the law does not allow they should be denied access.

I have never thought there is a single measure government can take to stop the boats. There are various actions that need to be intensified.

1. There needs to be more action against the businesses that provide the boats and run the boat services. These are all illegal unlicensed boat services breaking French/Dutch/Belgian/German and EU law over safety at sea. They doubtless fail to pay taxes, fail to file accounts and may be money laundering. They are endangering people's lives. You would have thought the continental authorities would see the need to enforce these laws. If they will not the UK has to do so. The UK needs to get better supervision of French beaches launching these services from its French Agreement and for the money it sends the French government to do this. It must be obvious to anyone policing a beach in France that these overloaded boats about to depart are not licensed local trips.
2. There needs to be more success in prompt processing of applications for asylum. The aim should not be to allow or encourage a high rate of approval of asylum grants just to settle cases easily but an honest assessment. The UK judges far more illegal arrivals from normally safe countries to be genuine asylum cases than other European countries do. This acts as a pull factor for more to come.
3. Those who are genuine asylum seekers should apply under one of the many routes of legal entry. Their cases should be determined in reasonable time so people can settle and get a job as quickly as possible.
4. The government needs to review what it offers illegal arrivals in the UK, comparing it with how they are treated in comparable countries like France. If we are more generous then we will attract more.
5. The government does need to sort out where it can send illegals to when their cases have been determined. This may well need strengthening the law in the way I have set out.